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Religious boundary given final planning approval

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By Chris Hewett

A new religious boundary in Mill Hill will "free up" Jewish people to live their lives as normal on the Sabbath.

Large metal poles will be constructed at 18 sites in Mill Hill after the final details of a Jewish eruv were approved last night.

The six-metre high posts will be erected at various locations and joined together by a wire to mark the boundary recognised by many practising Jews.

Work of any sort is banned outside the home on Shabbat, between Friday night and Saturday, and for many of the strictest members of the faith that can include basic activities like pushing and carrying.

The observance can cause severe restrictions to the daily lives of those who follow the rules, which do not apply within the boundaries of the eruv.

The plans were approved in principle in 2010 but final details were passed by Barnet Council's planning committee last night.

Gill Gallick, eruv committee chairman at Mill Hill United Synagogue, which is funding the construction, said: "We're thrilled that this final hurdle has been overcome. It will make a huge difference to a lot of people, young and old.

"Mothers can now push prams and elderly and disabled people in wheelchairs can travel within the community. People will be freed up to move from place to place."

The eruv will be the fifth in the area and "the final piece in the jigsaw" as it connects others in Barnet, Stanmore, Edgware and a larger one covering Finchley, Golders Green and Hendon.

Councillors unanimously approved the amendments last night and work on the construction is expected to begin within the next six months.

Committee chairman, Councillor Maureen Braun, said: "This will make a huge difference to the people that follow these aspects of the religion and will cause no problem for anyone who doesn't.

"It is a lovely sign of tolerance and understanding and gives so much to the people that want it."

Mill Hill United Synagogue says the eruv will cost between £35,000 to £40,000 and maintenance could cost up to £10,000-a-year.

Anti-climb paint will also be painted on many of the posts to deter vandalism.

A total of 1,300 residents and organisations were consulted on its construction over the lengthy planning process.

Some sent in letters of objection over fears it may become an eyesore but council officers concluded the green belt "would not be compromised".

Ms Gallick said: "We are the only synagogue in the area so everyone who is affected by it is one of ours – it is very exciting."

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